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*ZOROASTRIANISM*

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The religion whose adherents call themselves "Worshippers of Mazda," the Wise God, and which we commonly name after its founder Zoroastrianism, is in many ways of peculiar interest. It is the only monotheistic religion of Indo-European origin, as Judaism is the one independent Semitic monotheism.<sup>1</sup> Zoroastrianism is, further, eminently an ethical religion, both in its idea of God and of what God requires of men. It presents itself as a revelation of God's will through his prophet. His will is that men, renouncing the false gods, should serve the Wise Lord alone, obey his word, and contend on his side for the defeat of evil and the triumph of all good in nature and society and in the character of the individual. The prophet warns men that the day of the Lord is at hand, an ordeal by fire in which God will separate between those who serve him and those who serve him not, and of the endless blessedness or the unfathomable misery beyond. God has his allies not only among men but among the hosts of spirits; to the hierarchy of good powers corresponds a hierarchy of evil. In the endeavor to clear God of the responsibility for evil, Zoroastrianism recognized a powerful head of the evil spirits, a devil. But it had firm faith in the final triumph of good and the end of all evil. When that day shall come, all the dead will be raised to stand at the bar of God in the grand assize and receive the just recompense of reward. The main features of this es-

<sup>1</sup> The term "monotheism" is often loosely applied to monarchical types of polytheism, in which one god is raised to a sovereign rank among the gods, as well as to the pantheistic speculation which sees in all the gods only names, forms, partial manifestations, of one god; but, inasmuch as in both cases worship continues to be paid to many gods in their own name and right, such religions can only be classed as polytheistic. We may distinguish them as monarchical polytheism or pantheistic polytheism, but to call them monotheism, even qualified by a contradictory epithet such as "latent" or "esoteric," is a misuse of words. It may be added that no religion of these types has ever shown the slightest tendency to develop into *religious* monotheism. With monotheistic philosophies we are not here concerned.

chatology were adopted by the Jews and adapted to the premises of their own religion; through Judaism it passed to Christianity, where it was fused with elements of diverse origin; from Judaism and Christianity, and to some extent directly from later Zoroastrianism, Mohammedanism inherited it. The orthodox beliefs about the hereafter of the world and the individual entertained by the nations of Western Asia, Europe, and America, are thus ultimately derived in no small part from Zoroastrianism; only in the farther East, in India, China, and Japan, does another system prevail.

Zoroastrianism had its origin in a branch of the great Iranian race. It rose to power as the religion of the Medo-Persian empire, and while it spread widely among the subject peoples, particularly in Asia Minor, its strongholds were always the Iranian lands; the Sassanian revival proceeded from Persia. The prophet broke with the religion of his people and combatted it, his utterances are largely shaped by this antagonism; yet doubtless, if we knew more about it, it would be found that his own thought had historical antecedents in the faith of his fathers. When Mazdaism prevailed, it took back much which in its first zeal it had discarded—Iranian gods, forms of worship, and superstitions. It is necessary, therefore, to premise somewhat about the race and its old religion.

The ancestors of the Aryo-Indians and of the Iranians before their migrations lived side by side on the high plateau north of the Hindu Kush. Thence the former made their way into the valleys of Kabul and the Indus and southward to the Panjab, while the latter spread from their old seats westward into Media and Persia. The age of these movements is not certainly known. In the 15th century B.C., rulers of Mitanni, on the upper Euphrates and eastward, bear Iranian names, and names of the same origin appear about the same time in the Amarna despatches among the invaders of Palestine. At Boghaz Keui in Asia Minor, a Hittite capital, the names of Aryan gods, Mitra and Varuna, Indra and Nasatya, have been found in Mitannian documents dating from the beginning of the 14th century. The mass of the population in these countries was, however, plainly not Aryan. Be-

yond this fragmentary evidence of the presence of Aryans in the West in the great upheaval of nations between the 15th century and the 13th, the Iranians first appear on the stage of history in the 9th century, when the Assyrian king Shalmanassar made a campaign in Media (836 B.C.). His successors were frequently at war in the same regions, but evidently with petty princes and rulers of cities, not with a united Median kingdom. Such a kingdom, indeed, can hardly have arisen before the second half of the 7th century.

Though it suffered greatly from the Scythian inroads, it reaped the benefit of the more severe blow which the barbarians inflicted on Assyria, and in 606 Cyaxares took and destroyed Nineveh and made an end of the Assyrian Empire. In the following years he extended his sway over Asia Minor as far as the Halys, and to the east over a large part of the Iranian lands. In 553 the Persian Cyrus, a vassal king reigning at Anshan in Susiana, revolted against his Median overlord, Astyages, and made himself king in his room, the supremacy of the Persians succeeding to that of the Medes. In 546 Sardes fell, and in the next few years Caria, Lycia, and the Greek cities on the coast were subdued; Babylon was taken in 539, and its empire passed to the Persians; Egypt was conquered by Cambyses in 525. Shaken to its foundations by the revolts which followed the death of Cambyses and the usurpation of the Pseudo-Smerdis, the Persian power was re-established more firmly than ever by Darius Hystaspis. It surpassed the empires that preceded it not more in the extent of its dominion than in the strongly centralized organization which gave it a stability none of them had known.

The inscriptions of Darius display him as a zealous worshipper of Ahura Mazda, the "Wise Lord," the supreme god of the Zoroastrian faith, to whom he attributes his victories over enemies and rebels. That similar testimony is not borne by the inscriptions of Cyrus may be explained by their limited extent and different character.

The religion of the early Iranians was closely akin to that of the Vedic Indians. One of the greatest of the Iranian gods is Mithra, the Vedic Mitra; other Indo-Iranian gods are Zoroastrian devils, like Indra and Nasatya (Naonhaithya); the myth

of the dragon-slayer appears among both peoples, as do the first man, Yama (Iranian Yima), first to die and ruler in the realm of the dead, and the conception of the order of the world, natural, ritual, moral (Vedic *Rita*, Avestan *Asha*). The preparation and offering of a drink made from the expressed juice of a plant has the same central place in both religions under the same name, *Soma*, *Haoma*; the priests who kindle and tend the sacred fire bear the same title, Persian *Athravan*, Indian *Atharvan*. These agreements are all the more conclusive because Zoroastrianism did its best to efface every vestige of Iranian heathenism.

Apart from the changes thus purposely wrought, there are fundamental differences in the temper and spirit of the two religions that must be attributed to other causes, among which climatic environment and the conditions of livelihood were doubtless peculiarly potent. In India, from the Brahmanic period when speculative thinking sets in, the prevailing trend is toward monism, now metaphysical, now pantheistic. Even more universally the world is denied as unreal or renounced as evil through and through. Salvation, the end of all philosophy as well as of religion, is escape from the endless chain of bodily existences upon each of which man enters laden with the deeds of previous lives, a deliverance achieved by overcoming the ignorance or the blind desire which holds man bound on the wheel of rebirth. Abnegation of the world, withdrawal from society, repression of the body, meditation, methodical cultivation of trance-states, are the means by which transcendental knowledge may be attained and desire extirpated in all the orthodoxies and heresies of India. It is not strange that a people who thought so ill of the world should never have played a part in the history of the world, nor have developed a national consciousness in any other form than antipathy to their foreign masters.

For the Iranians, in vastly less favored lands, where man had to wring a meagre living from an unkindly nature, subject to violent extremes of cold and heat, perpetually on his defence against the predatory hordes of the steppes and the desert, life was an unceasing conflict with hostile powers, visible and invisible; watchfulness, courage, energy, were the virtues on which existence depended. In contrast to the metaphysical turn of the

Hindu mind, the Iranian genius was eminently practical; hard reasonableness marks its thinking, adaptability distinguishes its action. The race had not only the qualities needed to conquer an empire but the higher qualities that are required to organize and govern one in a degree matched only by the Romans, whom in other respects also they much resemble. All these traits are reflected in their religion. It, too, is a conflict with innumerable evil powers; but the Iranians do not for that reason despair of the world, for the good is mightier than the evil and shall prevail. Man's salvation is not to flee from the world, but to combat evil wherever he finds it and do a man's part to overcome it. This strenuous and militant type was not first impressed upon the religion by the Zoroastrian reform; it is rather a characteristic of the popular religion which is impressed upon the higher faith.

Zoroastrianism is the result of a prophetic reformation of the old Iranian religion which may be compared in various ways to the work of the Israelite prophets, and its sacred scriptures, containing prophetic utterances, liturgy and ceremonial, hymns, cosmogony, and the like, have many points of resemblance to the Old Testament. The comprehensive name of the scriptures is Avesta. Besides the canonical writings, there are many works of later date and in another language which are of value for the history of the religion in Sassanian and Moslem times.

The Avesta as we have it is only a part of a much larger collection made, according to a credible tradition, under the first Sassanian king (226-240 A.D.), and extant, it seems, even in the 9th century of our era. According to the Parsi tradition this collection consisted of twenty-one books, of which only one, the Vendidad, has been preserved substantially in the original form. The rest of our Avesta is made up of the remains of other books combined and arranged for liturgical purposes, not without some later additions. As now in our hands the Avesta consists of five parts: the Yasna, a liturgy recited by the priests at the offering to all the deities, with the Vispered, a supplement used on certain occasions; the Vendidad, dealing chiefly with the rules of clean and unclean, and with purifications and expiations, all from the point of view indicated by its title, "Antidemonic Law," since the

unclean is the sphere of evil spirits; the Yashts are hymns of various age and poetic merit in honor of particular deities; finally, the Khordah Avesta is a collection of prayers for the private use of the laity as well as the priests. Inserted in the Yana (chapters 28-54) are the Gathas, metrical texts in a different dialect from the rest, the oldest and most sacred part of the Avesta.

Zoroaster has not escaped the fate of other religious founders, including Buddha and Jesus, of being pushed off the earth into the sky; his story, like theirs, was interpreted as but another turn of the kaleidoscopic sun-myth or storm-myth. The life of Zoroaster, as it is written in late books like the Zerdusht Nameh, is completely legendary; some traits of this legend were known even to Greek authors. In the older Avesta, however, and above all in the Gathas, the prophet is an altogether human figure, and no modern Avestan scholar doubts that he was an historical person. The Mazdaean doctrine is plainly not the evolution of a popular religion: it is the work of a thinker and reformer who combats the religion of his people; its gods are his devils and its priests their servants.

It must be confessed that credible tradition has not much to tell us about the prophet. Concerning the age in which he lived there is wide diversity. The Greeks put him 5000 years before the Trojan war or 6000 years before Plato, probably in consequence of some misunderstanding of the Zoroastrian theory of the ages of the world. The Bundahish (9th century A.D.), followed by several Parsi and Moslem authors, offers a seemingly exact date for the beginning of the prophet's ministry, namely 258 years before Alexander the Great, from which, with certain corrections, it has been reckoned that Zoroaster was born in 660 B.C. The Bundahish gives, however, the list of kings on which the 258 years was computed, with the duration of their reigns, beginning with Vishtasp, the patron of Zoroaster, and ending with the last Darius (Codomannus) and Alexander. The succession does not correspond even remotely with the Achaemenian line; it gives two successive reigns of 90 (or, as West corrects the figures, 120) and 112 years respectively. Under these circumstances it is hazardous to assume that the total is a trustworthy tradition,

while the particulars are inexplicable. There remains the fact, already noted, that Darius Hystaspis was a Mazdaean; the religion had therefore taken root in Persia by the 6th century, and it is inferred from the name Mazdaka, twice occurring in Assyrian inscriptions in lists of Median petty kings, that it had adherents in Media in the 8th century.

Tradition, though not with unanimous voice, points to Bactria, in far eastern Iran, as the scene of the first triumphs of the new faith. Vishtasp (Hystaspes),<sup>2</sup> Zoroaster's royal convert and patron, came of a line native in Seistan; with this the horizon of the Gathas seems to agree. About Zoroaster's birthplace there is no agreement; the vicinity of Lake Urmia in Aderbeijan (Atropatene) and Rai (Raghae) in north-eastern Media are rival claimants, while some Greek authors made him a Bactrian. Several modern scholars harmonize the traditions by the hypothesis that he was a native of Media, who being, like other prophets, without honor in his own country, migrated to Bactria and there found better success. However that may be, it seems probable that the doctrine spread westward into Media and Persia from eastern Iran.

From the Gathas we learn that much of the success of the new faith was due to the support of Vishtasp, who seems in some passages to have stood model for a portrait of the good king. Zoroaster had other allies in high places in the wise counsellor Jamaspa and his brother Frashaoshtra; he married Hvovi, a daughter of the latter, and gave his own daughter by another marriage to the former. One of the first believers was his cousin, Maidyoi-maonha, and others of his family are known by name. A Turanian convert, Fryana, receives a high encomium from the prophet for his piety and generosity. The progress of the new faith was doubtless slow, and when it began to overcome indifference it was confronted by opposition. There were moments when the prophet himself could not repress his questionings: "Tell me truly, O Lord, who is the true believer and who the misbeliever? Art thou the wrong-doer, or is it the misbeliever who robs me of my blessings? How is it that he is not recognized

<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps not superfluous to remark that this Hystaspes is not the father of Darius.



as the evil-doer?" "To what land shall I flee, whither betake myself in flight? They put discord between me and my family and patrons. They who exalt the misbeliever make my life in vain, because they keep the householders and their wives from possessing the (heavenly) inheritance, those, O Wise One, who turn away believers from the Good Mind." His most persistent opponents, as might be supposed, were the priests of the old religion.

The allusions in the Gathas are from their nature obscure, but they have all the marks of historical verity. In the later Avesta the legend begins. The Vendidad tells of Zoroaster's temptation, at the instance of Ahriman, by the false demon Buiti<sup>3</sup> and "insidious perdition," that is, unbelief. His miraculous birth and the miracles he wrought were narrated in lost books of the Avesta, and are retold with further embellishments in mediaeval writings; the wars between the believing king Vishtasp and the Turanian Arjasp are wars of religion, and fill a large space in legend and in the Persian epic. According to these sources, Zoroaster died at the age of seventy-seven, murdered, some say, by a heathen priest and sorcerer; slain with the priests in the fire temple by Arjasp's Turanians at the storming of Balkh, as the Shah Nameh narrates it.

In the Gathas, Zoroaster declares that Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, has revealed to him the word which he proclaims to men, and he tells at length of his calling to this ministry. It is his mission to teach men to obey Ahura Mazda and strive after the Right (Asha), through which they shall obtain the good things of this world and the other; no other man thus teaches the law of the Lord. His message is a way of salvation from destruction revealed by Ahura Mazda, who knows. He sets before men life and death, and every one must choose between them; even a Turanian who obeys the truth can be saved. In the day of the great affair, each will receive the reward of the teaching he has followed. The truth may now be hard to discern from falsehood, but one day Ahura Mazda will establish the faith by visible proof.

The fundamental conception of the Gathas is the irreconcilable

<sup>3</sup> The demon of idolatry.

antagonism of the principles of good and evil, truth and falsehood, knowledge and ignorance—two primal spirits, of whom, according to their own declaration, the one is good, the other evil, in thought and word and deed. Between them the upright have made the right choice; not so the wicked. “I will proclaim the two primal spirits at the beginning of the world, of which the good spirit said to the evil, Neither our thoughts nor our teachings, our understandings, our creeds, our words and our deeds, neither our consciences nor our souls are in accord!” The demons (*daevas*, primarily the gods of the popular religion) chose not rightly between these two spirits, but were deceived into choosing the evil mind, and all ran to Aeshma, through whom they seek to poison the lives of men. They are all the brood of the evil mind; they deceive men, and so deprive them of their good in this life and of immortality beyond. The comprehensive name for evil is Druj, “the Lie,” which is sometimes personified. Hell is the world of the Lie.

God is Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, often called only Mazda, the All-wise, or Ahura, Lord. He is the creator of the world and all things therein. “It was by thy thought that in the beginning, O Mazda, thou didst form us and the world and religion and the (spiritual) intelligences; that thou didst put life into the body, that thou didst create good works and true doctrine, and that thou dost inspire the desire of those who strive after them.” The Lord knows all that men do, his eyes behold their secret deeds as well as those done in open day, he knows all that is and is to be. He requites men according to their deeds in this world and the other. No other gods are named in the Gathas. The polemic is aimed at the *Daevas* (false gods) in general, and against their priests as representatives of false religion.

What the true religion demands of men is that they should decide for Ahura Mazda, choosing the way of truth and goodness. Man must give himself to Asha, Vohu Mano, and Ahura Mazda; he must follow the Lord, be like him, and teach others to be like him; and must labor for the renewal of the world; one of the most effective means to this end is the faithful teaching of the true religion. The teaching of the evil (the old religion) is to be scrupulously shunned.

The ruling principle in dealing with fellow-men is to do good to the good and harm to the evil, for the evil are the foes of the Lord and his good world, the allies of the evil spirit and the *Daevas*; to do good to them would therefore be treasonably to give aid and comfort to the enemy in the great conflict. The evil are, first of all, those who reject the true religion and its distinctive morals and customs. Gifts to the bad are a sin; but to support the poor who live in holiness and good thought is a virtue. The same rule extends to the brute creation. The useful animals, especially cattle and dogs, are to be kindly treated, well-fed and cared for; cruelty and neglect are grave sins, wanton killing of cattle—under which head the animal sacrifices of the *Daeva*-worshippers fall—a crime. On the other hand, we shall see that the destruction of beasts of prey and noxious vermin is in later books a highly meritorious work.

So also the tilling of soil, the reclamation of waste land by rooting out weeds and thorns and extending irrigation to make grain and fruits grow, is a part of practical religion; it is in fact the conquest of a piece of the enemy's country for the Lord. No religion has set so high a value on agricultural labor as the service of God. The enemies of the Lord are the predatory Turanians who raid the settlements and carry off the husbandman's cattle; believers are bound not to harry *Mazdaean* villages. The conflict of religions is a struggle of agricultural civilization against nomadic barbarism, a situation which throws an instructive light on the beginnings of Zoroastrianism. From the first, Mazdaism was thus directly a civilizing force.

The *Gathas* give other glimpses of the conditions of the time. The prophet denounces unjust judges, the corrupt rulers who for gain put power into the hands of the wicked, the tyrannical and oppressive princes, and those who oppose the true religion—for a misbeliever cannot be a good king—the false teachers, deniers, and deceivers. He paints with affection the character of the good prince. The good king is he who practises the good in thought and word and deed, according to the teaching of the wise, "He, O Ahura, is the being who best embodies thee." He is generous, and nourishes the virtuous poor. Blessed of Ahura, above all, is the prince who adopts the *Mazdaean* faith and makes

it prevail. Like the Israelite prophets with their ideal king of the golden age to come, or like Plato with his royal philosopher, Zoroaster sets his hope of the triumph of the true religion on a good sovereign.

Zoroaster believed that God would vindicate the truth of his message in the great judgment which was near at hand. The deaf and the blind who will not be converted will be destroyed, the righteous are borne by two angels to the abode of Vohu Mano. "The sinners do not know the signal punishment that they are drawing upon them by their teachings, the punishment of the molten metal,<sup>4</sup> but thou, O Ahura Mazda, knowest their evil deeds." In the other life long torture awaits the wicked. "For him who has tried to deceive the upright there will hereafter be groans, a long abode in darkness, foul food, and insulting words. This is the world, O ye wicked, to which your works and your religion are taking you." The dead must pass the trial at the judgment bridge: the good cross it without difficulty, the wicked fall into the abyss, to dwell forever in the world of the Lie, while for the righteous splendid rewards are in store. There is mention also of those in whom good and evil are evenly balanced, who in the later eschatology inhabit a kind of limbo. Whether the resurrection of the dead is alluded to in the Gathas is disputable; at least, it is not the prominent feature of the doctrine that it became when the judgment receded to a distant age.

The Gathas cannot be thought to contain anything like the full presentation of Zoroaster's teaching; in them he speaks, for example, in a standing phrase of good thoughts, words, deeds, but seldom defines what is good. The observances of religion, prayer, adoration, offering, are referred to, but nowhere prescribed. The sacred fire is a gift of Ahura Mazda; the Lord himself appeared to the prophet when he made the sacred offering on Ahura's fire; but of the Haoma offering, which has so large a place in the Persian worship, there is no mention. Zoroaster speaks as a prophet, not as a law-giver or a liturgist. A comparison of the Gathas with the rest of the Yasna, in which they are imbedded, makes this all the clearer.

<sup>4</sup> A kind of ordeal by fire.

The character of the religion is well illustrated by the old Zoroastrian confession of faith (Yasna 12):

I repudiate the Daevas. I confess myself a worshipper of Mazda, a Zarathushtrian, as an enemy of the Daevas, a prophet of the Lord, praising and worshipping the Immortal Holy Ones (Amesha Spentas). To the Wise Lord I promise all good; to him, the good, beneficent, righteous, glorious, venerable, I vow all the best; to him from whom is the cow, the law, the (celestial) luminaries, with whose luminaries (heavenly) blessedness is conjoined. I choose the holy, good Armaiti (Humble Devotion), she shall be mine. I abjure theft and cattle-stealing, plundering and devastating the villages of Mazda worshippers.

It is my duty to grant to the inmates of the house freedom of movement and residence,<sup>5</sup> and to the cattle with which they live on earth. With due reverence I vow this to Asha (Righteousness) by the consecrated water: I will henceforth nor plunder nor lay waste the villages of Mazda-worshippers, nor assail their persons and lives. I renounce fellowship with the wicked, lawless, evil-doing Daevas, the most deceitful, corrupt, and wicked of all, and with adherents of the Daevas, with sorcerers and those who follow them, with every bad man, whoever he may be, in thoughts and words and deeds and deportment, as I hereby renounce fellowship with the mischievous heretic.

As the Wise Lord, in all his communings with Zarathushtra instructed him, as he in all his communings with the Wise Lord renounced fellowship with the Daevas, so I also, as a worshipper of the Lord and follower of Zarathushtra, renounce the fellowship of the Daevas, as Zarathushtra, the representative of the true faith, renounced them.

Of the faith of the waters, the plants, the useful cow, the faith of the Wise Lord who created the cow and the upright man, the faith of Zarathushtra, of King Vishtaspa, of Frashaoshtra and Jamaspa, the faith of all the messengers of salvation and their helpers, and of every right believer—in this faith and in this promise I am a worshipper of Mazda. I confess myself a Mazda-worshipper, a Zarathushtrian, by vow and confession. I promise well-thought thought, well-spoken word, well-done deed. I pledge myself to the religion of the Mazda-worshippers, which makes an end of strife and lays down weapons and promotes kindred marriage, which is the highest, best, most beautiful of those that are or shall be, the religion of faith in Ahura, the religion of Zarathushtra. To the Wise Lord I promise all good. This is the profession of the Mazdaean religion.

<sup>5</sup> Abolition of slavery?

The antecedents of this teaching are unknown. The title Ahura, which becomes in Mazdaism the name of the Supreme God, is the same word as Asura, which in the Vedas is the name of a group, or class, of deities among whom Varuna and Mitra are the foremost. Of all the Vedic gods, Varuna is the one whose character most nearly approaches that of Ahura Mazda, so that some scholars have been led to think that the latter is really a development of Varuna. Ahura (or the good spirit which is identified with Ahura) is clad with the solid firmament as with a vestment,<sup>6</sup> as becomes a god of heaven. The Iranian Mithra, ignored in the Gathas, could not be kept in the background, and in the religion of later times became the first of the gods. He is closely assimilated in character to Ahura, being, as a god of light, the god of truth and good faith. The Daevas are the gods of the popular religion and of the tribes who did not embrace the Zoroastrian reform. The word is in India the prevailing name for the gods (*deva*), while there *asura* came in later times to be applied to demons. Among the arch-devils of the later Avesta are Indra, Sauru, and Naonhaithya, the Indian Indra, Çarva (Rudra), and Nasatya (a title of the Aṅvins). It is a tempting conjecture that the ancestors of the Iranian tribes among which Mazdaism arose were more intimately connected with the Aryo-Indian tribes whose greatest god was Varuna than with the Indra-worshippers who in the invasion and conquest gained for themselves and their gods the leading place; but the theory of Haug that a religious conflict between the Mazda-worshippers and those who adhered to the old nature religion preceded the separation of the two branches of the race and was one of its causes is not tenable, and even the modified form which Geldner has given it does not wholly commend itself.

At most, these relations only reveal the background of the Mazdaism, not the origin of the religion itself. That the latter is not the evolution of a natural polytheism is obvious, as has already been observed. The teaching of the Gathas is, as distinctly as that of the Upanishads, the outcome of reflection; much more distinctly it bears the stamp of an individual thinker. It may very well be that the problems which engaged Zoroaster

<sup>6</sup> Yasna 30 5.

were not raised by him for the first time, but, however many others may have thought about these questions, he thought them through.

The monotheism of the Gathas is much more advanced than that of the loftiest Vedic hymns to Varuna; Ahura Mazda has no partner nor rival. The existence of the beings whom the people worship as gods is not denied, but they are false gods, demons, who, deceived, made choice of the evil spirit as their lord, and in turn delude men into following them. A similar conception is common in Judaism, and is expressed by Paul, "The sacrifices which the heathen offer, they offer to demons and not to gods."<sup>7</sup>

Zoroaster sees everywhere in the moral world good and evil arrayed over against each other: there are men whose head and heart are right, who strive to be good and do good, and there are others whose aims and conduct are just the opposite, and so it has always been. This difference is not accidental, every man has the character he has chosen. The types of these contrasted characters are two primal spirits, antagonists from the beginning of history, the good, or beneficent, spirit, or, as it might not improperly be rendered, the Holy Spirit, and the evil, or baleful, spirit. The good spirit sometimes seems to be Ahura Mazda himself, as the spirit in the Old Testament is sometimes distinct from Jahveh, sometimes identified with him; the evil spirit, the evil mind, is akin to the demon, Lie. The principles of good and evil are thus personalized, but the evil spirit is a much less concrete and dramatic figure than the Ahriman of later writings, who is not only a deceiver, but creator and ruler of the bad half of the world. The question of the origin of moral evil is followed back to the "primal" evil spirit; where he came from is left as a problem for later centuries. Whatever may be true of later developments of Zoroastrianism, the Gathas are not dualistic otherwise than as any system that tries to absolve God of the responsibility for moral evil is dualistic.

By the side of Ahura Mazda, ministers who do his will, are the "Immortal Beneficent Ones," the Amesha Spentas,<sup>8</sup> Vohu Mano,

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. 10 20.

<sup>8</sup> The name is not found in the Gathas themselves, but occurs in a prose text of approximately the same age.

“Good Mind” (intelligence, purpose, disposition), Asha, Right (as conformity to the moral order), Kshatra, Sovereignty (the Kingdom of God), Armaiti, Devotion (humble piety), Hauvartat and Ameretat, Welfare and Immortality; with these six the genius of obedience, Sraosha, is sometimes joined. These are attributes of God, ideals of human character in the likeness of God, and spiritual blessings which God bestows on those who strive after them in the way of his appointment; they are not abstract ideas, but personified qualities, or spirits and genii of qualities. Among them Vohu Mano and Asha naturally hold the highest place. Here also penetrating and constructive thought is apparent. Asha (Arta, in Persian proper names; Vedic Rita), “Order” is indeed an Aryan conception and name, which in the Vedas sometimes appears as the will or law of Varuna, sometimes as an independent principle; but in the Gathas it is raised to a higher ethical plane as the law of righteousness in every relation. The other figures and the part they play are characteristically Mazdaean; they are as little a popular creation as the Atman of the Upanishads.

The religion of the Gathas is an ethical religion, not as that term may be applied to the higher nature religions of civilized peoples—the Greeks, for example—which make the gods the guardians of customary law or vindicators of an ideal righteousness, but in the sense that the nature and will of God are wholly moral. The human virtues are the divine attributes—the fact tells more than the direct moral injunctions of the Ahura Mazda. This explains the silence of the Gathas about worship. It is only by allusions that we learn that the cult of the sacred fire, the element of light and purity, belonged to primitive Mazdaism as it did to the older Aryan religion and to later Zoroastrianism. In all this we are reminded again of the ethical monotheism of the Hebrew prophets. There is, however, one noteworthy difference. In Israel ethical philosophy moves within the limits of a national religion: it is the national god who becomes in the hands of the prophets a righteous god, and consequently, down to the fall of the nation, the religious subject is the people, the retribution is national and historical. Zoroastrianism addressed itself in the beginning to individuals, bidding every man choose



between truth and falsehood, good and evil; the retribution is individual, not collective, whether it be on the day of the great affair or after death. By converting kings and people, it became the national religion of the Iranian people and the Achaemenian kings.

God's righteous rule involves the idea of retribution. He rewards faith and good works in this life, but on the other hand the good may be harried and persecuted by the bad. Zoroaster's mind is on the imminent crisis, when by the ordeal of molten metal God shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, between believers and unbelievers, or on the separation at the judgment bridge. This bridge, of which Zoroaster speaks as though it was a familiar notion, may have been a piece of popular eschatology—it has an interesting parallel among some North American Indians—and the glimpses of heaven and hell have nothing distinctive about them, but the standard is new in its moral rigorousness, and, above all, in that a man's religious confession is a decisive factor.

The conception of revelation, also, is characteristic. The Vedic Rishis were inspired poets, the gods put in their mouths the hymns they sang to the god's honor at the sacrifices; but Zoroaster's revelation is prophetic: what comes to him is not how the gods elect to be praised or worshipped, but what God will have man believe and how he will have him live. What Ahura Mazda thus makes known to him the prophet proclaims to his fellow-men.

Nothing is known of the way in which Zoroastrianism spread through the Iranian lands. We may surmise that the efforts of its adherents were directed, like the prophet's own, to the conversion of princes who should support the good religion and cause it to prevail over the Daevas and their worshippers. Like every other religion which is conceived as the only true and saving faith—like Christianity and Mohammedanism, for example—Mazdaism is in principle intolerant; in the Gathas believers are exhorted to chastise the misbelievers with the sword, and it is not improbable that forcible suppression of heathen worship at home and wars with heathen neighbors were from the beginning effective means of establishing the kingdom of God and expand-

ing its dominion—so much of truth there may be in the legends of the wars of the faith, however little of historical fact they may embody. How generally Zoroastrianism was the religion of the Iranian peoples before the rise of the Persian Empire, there is no means of determining; only about Media have we testimony that it was the dominant, if not the exclusive, religion of the country, whose priests, the Magi, were a powerful hereditary class.

In becoming the religion of rulers and people, Zoroastrianism took up again many features of the older religion which the founder had rejected or ignored, and its distinctive teachings were reshaped in forms more easily apprehended by the vulgar mind. Darius in his inscriptions names no god but Ahuramazda, though he speaks generally of the clan-gods, or genii of the clans—a conception not alien to the fundamental ideas of Mazdaism—and of “the other deities.” Artaxerxes Mnemon (404–362 B.C.), however, names Mithra and Anahita by the side of Ahuramazda, and Berossus reports that this king first set up images of the goddess Anahita not only in his capitals, Babylon, Susa, Ecbatana, but at Damascus and Sardes, from which it may be inferred that he was especially devoted to her worship. Darius Ochus prays, “May Ahuramazda and Mithra protect me and this land.” That the inscriptions make no mention of the evil principle is not evidence of unorthodoxy;<sup>9</sup> the inscriptions of Christian kings, it has been pertinently remarked, do not abound in references to the devil, however sincerely their authors may have believed that he was the instigator of rebellion.

The Achaemenian kings were buried in tombs, a mode of disposing of the dead abhorrent to the sacred law of the Vendidad, but seemingly not condemned in the Gathas. Herodotus affirms of his own observation that the exposure of the dead was practised by the Magi, but adds, “the Persians envelop the body in wax and bury it in the earth,” and Strabo makes the same distinction: the Magians alone leave the bodies to the birds of prey. The exposure of the dead on raised platforms is not infrequent among wandering tribes,<sup>10</sup> and has of itself nothing to do with a

<sup>9</sup> In the inscriptions of Darius Hystaspis, the Druj (Lie) appears, as in the Gathas, to be the comprehensive word for evil.

<sup>10</sup> Examples are found in America as well as among the Mongols.

fear of polluting the earth, which might seem to be equally well attained by coating the body in wax. We can only infer that the former was no prescription of primitive Zoroastrianism, but a custom of a particular region or tribe which in Sassanian times succeeded in being made law.

In the Indian Vedas Mitra is the constant comrade of Varuna, so closely associated with him, indeed, that there are hardly any hymns to Mitra alone. It is possible that the worship of this god was more prominent among the western Iranians than in either India or in Bactria.<sup>11</sup> In character he is much like Ahura Mazda, but, as becomes a god of the old mythology, he is a more heroic figure. A champion of truth and right, a god who gives victory to the good cause, it is not strange that as a popular god he outshone his theological superior. His worship spread widely in the subject lands, especially in Armenia and Cappadocia, and he appeared to many Greek observers to be the chief god of the Persians. Anahita Ardisura was a goddess of the waters, especially of the fructifying waters of heaven which pour down into the mythical lake Vourukasha and are thence distributed to the seven regions of the earth. She supplies the unfailing sources which revive vegetation and the herds; she creates in men and women the powers of reproduction, gives mothers easy childbirth and abundant milk. In the hymn to her praise (Yasht 5) the goddess is described as a fair and buxom maiden in rich attire, with a golden crown, perhaps as she was represented in art. As a goddess of fertility, she resembled a whole class of West Asiatic goddesses, and was in many places assimilated to them or identified with them, sometimes borrowing features of their cults—in Armenia, for example, religious prostitution—but there is no sufficient ground for the opinion that the goddess herself was borrowed from the Semites.<sup>12</sup> A male counterpart of Anahita Ardisura is Apam-Napat, the Water Child, an old Aryan deity of frequent occurrence in the Veda.

<sup>11</sup> A Mithradates is named among the assassins of Xerxes.

<sup>12</sup> The Babylonian Anat, whose name has a superficial resemblance to Anahita, is never so much as named in Assyrian or New-Babylonian texts, that is, in the period in which the Persians might have heard of her, and apparently even in earlier times had a place in the pantheon only because it was proper for Anu to have a wife. The West Syrian Anath, a warlike deity, also disappears from view long before the Persian time.

The religion of the Persians seemed to Greek observers a pure nature worship. They had no temples or images—as Herodotus opines, because they did not, like the Greeks, conceive the gods to be of the same nature as men. They offer sacrifice, he tells us, on mountain tops to Zeus, by which name is to be understood the whole circle of heaven; they sacrifice also to the sun and the moon and the earth, to fire and water and the winds. The Avesta contains hymns to the Sun and the Moon and to the star Sirius (Tishtrya); of the divine fire and the sacredness of water and air there will be more to say in another connection.

By the side of these nature powers the Immortal Beneficent Ones become personal deities and receive divine worship. In Strabo's time Vohu Mano (*Ωμανος*) had fire temples in Cappadocia, and images that were carried in procession. Ahura Mazda is the father and creator of them all; he brought them into being that they might be his ministers, and what he does in the world is mainly done through their instrumentality. Each of them presides over a province of nature: Vohu Mano over the useful animals, Asha Vahishta over fire, Khshatra Vairya over the metals, Spenta Armaiti is the goddess of earth; Haurvatat and Ameretat are the genii of waters and plants respectively. In the ecclesiastical calendar of later times each of these Amshaspands is regent of a certain month of the year and of a certain day of the month. All these divinities (Yazatas, modern Persian Izedes) are subordinate to Ahura Mazda; the theology is so far forth consistently monotheistic. But they receive individually and collectively the same kind of worship as the supreme God, and from the practical side the religion may be described as a monarchical polytheism with a somewhat numerous and varied pantheon.

The great Yashts betray a consciousness of the inconsistency, or perhaps we should say the innovation, by making Ahura Mazda himself commend or prescribe the worship of the other divinities. The Mithra hymn begins: "Ahura Mazda said to Spitama Zarathushtra, When I created Mithra with wide pastures, I created him, O Spitama, as worthy of sacrifice and worship as I, Ahura Mazda, myself am." The hymn to Anahita opens similarly:<sup>13</sup> "Ahura Mazda said to Spitama Zarathushtra,

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also Tishtrya Yasht, 52.

Worship, O Spitama Zarathushtra, my Ardvi, rich in blessings, pure, copious, wholesome, foe of demons, believing in Ahura, to whom the bodily world owes sacrifice and praise." To Anahita Ahura Mazda himself first made the Haoma offering, and prayed that Zarathushtra might accept his religion, which prayer she granted. Yet she also is produced by the word of Ahura Mazda.

The ethical dualism, if it may be so called, hardened in time into a theological dualism, in which an evil being of supernatural power stands over against Ahura Mazda. Aristotle and Hermippus had heard that according to the Magi there are two principles, a good divinity (*δαίμων*) and an evil divinity, the former called Zeus, or Oromasdes, the latter Hades, or Areimanios. To Ahriman the later Zoroastrian writings attribute the creation of all evil things, and he has his ministers, with the Evil Mind as Grand Vizier, each standing over against one of the Beneficent Ones. The eschatology also underwent a change. The great crisis which the prophet expected in his time did not come, and to later generations it did not seem imminent. The result was that the judgment of the individual at death became a separate act. The general judgment of Zoroaster's original conception was postponed to the end of the age, and to appear at that final assize the dead of all generations were brought to life again in the resurrection. This doctrine also was known to the Greeks before Alexander: Theopompus reports that the Magi teach that men will come to life again and be immortal in a spiritual state in which they neither need food nor cast a shadow.

The Macedonian conquest signified much more than the overthrow of the Persian empire; it was the invasion of the East by western civilization. Greek colonies were founded wherever the armies penetrated, and many of them became flourishing cities, and centres of more or less exotic Greek culture. The division of Alexander's empire left the greater part of its territory under Macedonian or Greek rule. A Greek Bactrian kingdom which arose about the middle of the third century comprised the old East Iranian lands and reached into India; on the west it bordered on the Seleucid empire. Parthia, however, under the native Arsacidan dynasty, succeeded a little later in conquering

its independence (247 B.C.), and Mithradates (174–136 B.C.) united in his kingdom a great part of the Iranian lands, while the Greek Bactrian kingdom went down (139 B.C.) under an invasion of nomad tribes from the great Scythian steppes. From the middle of the first century B.C., the Arsacidans were repeatedly involved in wars with Rome. Trajan cherished the ambition of reclaiming for western civilization the empire of Alexander, but by the destruction of Seleucia in 164 A.D. the Romans themselves dealt a blow to Greek influence in the East which the Parthians had been unable to inflict. Meanwhile the Parthian kings, who in earlier times had proudly put “Philhellene” on their coins, showed themselves more and more averse to foreign culture; a national, or perhaps we should rather say an Oriental, reaction set in in the first century of our era, the knowledge of Greek declined, and from the beginning of the third century western learning was accessible only in Aramaic translations.

The history of the religion during these centuries is very obscure. It is probable that it suffered in the beginning from the withdrawal of the state support it had enjoyed under the Achæmenians, and in the period of “acute Hellenization,” which apparently lasted for some generations, the would-be cultivated classes may have been as indifferent Zoroastrians as the upper classes in Jerusalem were indifferent Jews. The Parthian kings do not seem to have been distinguished for religious zeal, and the perpetual internal disorders of the kingdom and frequent changes of the ruling family were unfavorable conditions. The reaction of which we have spoken may have had its religious side; mediaeval Persian tradition which there is no reason for discrediting records that a king Valkash caused all that could be recovered of the Avesta from manuscripts and the memory of men to be collected and copied. It is uncertain whether Vologeses I (contemporary of Nero) or the third of the name (148–191 A.D.) is meant.

In Persia proper several series of coins show that native lines ruled over smaller or larger regions as vassals of Greek or Parthian kings or virtually their own masters. Early in the third century one of the Persian petty kings, who bore the historic name Artaxerxes (Ardashir I, acceded 212 A.D.), subdued the other

kinglets in the vicinity of Persepolis (Istakhr), and, when called to account by his Parthian overlord, beat him in a series of battles, the Persian Sassanian rule succeeding the Parthian much as seven centuries and a half before the Persian Achaemenian succeeded the Mede. The vassal states were subdued and incorporated in the kingdom, and Ardashir assumed the title, King of Kings of the Iranians. In Persia, on one side of the turbulent main current of history, Zoroastrianism had been preserved in greater purity than in regions where it was in contact with other religions, and it had evidently a stronger hold on both rulers and people. The rise of the Sassanian kingdom was both a national Persian restoration and a revival of the religion of the glorious Achaemenian times as a national religion. Ardashir includes "Mazdayasnian" (Mazda-worshipper) among his royal titles; at his order the priest Tansar prepared an authoritative canon and text of the Avestan scriptures. What we possess is, as has been already remarked, the remains of this Sassanian Avesta.

It is characteristic of the early Sassanian kings that Ardashir and Shapur I, during their occupation of Armenia, destroyed the images even of the Iranian gods and turned the temples into fire shrines, and there is a remarkable statement that Ardashir wished to suppress the venerable sacred fires in other centres, leaving only that in the capital—a singular parallel, if it be historical, to Josiah's reformation in Jerusalem. The inherent intolerance of Zoroastrian orthodoxy appeared in another way when Christianity, with its exclusive claims and its active propaganda, began to push into Sassanian territory. Political considerations also had a good deal to do with the treatment of Christians, especially after the Roman empire became Christian. Severe persecutions of the Christians occurred repeatedly; strict laws were made against heresy, and apostasy from the Zoroastrian faith was punished with death. The priesthood was an organized and powerful body, whose head had his seat at Rai in Media and was the first person in the state after the king.

The hundred years of wars between Rome and Persia, which began in 527 and was waged with great energy by Chosroes II (Parvez, 590-628), weakened both the decadent empires. The

Arabs wrested Syria from the Romans in 636 and Egypt in 639. By the battle of Kadesiya in 637 and that of Nehavend a few years later, the Persian empire passed into the hands of the Moslems. In a short time the armies of the Caliphs had subdued even the remotest East Iranian lands. Of the decline of Mazdaism under Mohammedan rule little is known. Doubtless many Zoroastrians embraced Islam, as multitudes of Christians did, to escape the disabilities or the oppressions to which they were subject. But systematic efforts to force them to change their religion were not made by the early Caliphs, the Zoroastrians being reckoned with Jews and Christians as "people who have scriptures," and therefore, according to the Koran, to be left undisturbed on condition of paying a head tax; only later were the Zoroastrians excluded from this protection. The extensive literary activity of the Parsi priests in original works as well as in Pahlavi translations and synopses of Avestan books, which lasted at least through the 9th century, shows that the religion still possessed some vitality, and even after that time less significant works were written in modern Persian. The number of Zoroastrians in Persia, however, steadily declined, especially, it may be surmised, after the more fanatical and intolerant Shiites came into power. Two hundred years ago they were estimated at 100,000; to-day they can count less than 10,000 souls, chiefly in Yezd and Kerman.

In the early centuries of Islam, Persian Zoroastrians established themselves in India; the descendants of these emigrants, now numbering about 90,000, principally in the Bombay Presidency, are very prosperous. They have always adhered pretty faithfully to the practice of their law, but in the decadence of the religion in Persia, on whose authorities they were dependent in matters of learning, the Indian community also suffered. Their sacred scriptures, which they could only read in translations twice or thrice removed from the original, became with every generation less understood. The interest of European scholars in these scriptures awakened that of the Parsis themselves, and in the last half century a revival of learning, and a revival of religion by a return to its sources, have been in progress among them.



In the foregoing pages the endeavor has been made to outline the fundamental ideas of Zoroastrianism as they are set forth in the Gathas and to indicate, so far as the sources permit, the directions of subsequent development. It remains to describe the religion as it appears in the Sassanian Avesta and in later Pahlavi writings. This more complete survey will show that, through all its development and the manifold vicissitudes of its fortunes, Zoroastrianism has preserved its original character substantially unchanged.

Ahura Mazda is the supreme God; he is "the creator, Ahura Mazda, resplendent and glorious, the greatest, best, most beautiful of beings, the most constant, wisest, most perfect of form, supreme in righteousness, knowing to do good, giving joy at his good pleasure; who created us, formed us, and sustains us; who is the most beneficent spirit" (Yasna, 1). He is the "omniscient Lord, the most beneficent spirit, the creator of the material worlds, the righteous one" (Vendidad, 2 1). There are representations of Ahura Mazda in relief from both the Achaemenian and Sassanian times, as God the Father is represented without scruple in Christian art, but there were no images in his worship.

Ahura Mazda is absolutely good, and therefore cannot be the author of any kind of evil, natural or moral. All the evil in the world is the work of a power hostile to God and his good creation. The Persians preferred to admit, for the present order of things, a limitation of God's power, rather than to leave room for doubt of his perfect goodness. The first chapter of the Vendidad tells how Ahura Mazda created in order the several Iranian countries with their various excellences, and how for each Angra Mainyu created corresponding plagues—the killing cold of winter, intemperate heat; serpents, locusts, ants; rapine and lust, foreign oppression; unnatural vice, magic and witchcraft, the interment of the dead, and the eating of carrion; pride, doubt, disbelief. Evil spirits and demons, men of devilish character—who are, in fact, demons on earth as well as after death—beasts of prey and noxious vermin, all belong to Angra Mainyu, and the 99,999 diseases the flesh is heir to are his invention. The first of Ahura Mazda's creations was Vohu Mano, "Good Mind" (both good

intelligence and good moral sense), in consultation with whom he produced all his other creatures, just as in Proverbs 8 Wisdom is the first creation of Jahveh, and stood beside him as master-builder when God established the heavens and the earth.<sup>14</sup>

In Philo the Logos commonly takes the place of Wisdom, and the language which is used about the Logos is sometimes strikingly similar to what is said of Vohu Mano in the Avesta. Darmesteter was led by this resemblance, among other things, to think that the Gathas (which he regarded, not as the oldest part of the Avesta, but as comparatively recent) were directly influenced by Jewish Alexandrian philosophy. The conception in the Avesta, however, is vastly simpler than in Philo. Ahura Mazda is no transcendental Absolute, but a living God, and his Good Mind is not a metaphysical link between unchanging Being and the manifold and changing world of becoming, but a hypos-tasis of the intelligence and goodness with which God created the world. Vohu Mano is in this world the special guardian of the faithful; Good Mind is in a way embodied in them, so that when one of them has contracted uncleanness and is purified by the peculiar disinfectants prescribed in the "antidemonic law," it is said that the Vohu Mano (i.e. the man) is purified. He is also, as has already been noted, the guardian of the flocks and herds, with which the religion is hardly less concerned than with human beings. He receives the righteous at the gates of Paradise; and the significant name of the state of the blest is "the blessings of the Good Mind," as hell is the abode of the Evil (or the worst) Mind.

The Bundahish (9th cent. A.D.) describes the creation of the world, doubtless following substantially the lost Avestan books. The first of Ahura Mazda's "mundane creatures" was the sky, from which Vohu Mano produced the cosmic light and the good religion of the Mazdaeans—true religion was pre-existent, like the Torah in Judaism. Then followed the Amesha Spentas, Asha and the rest. "Of Ahura Mazda's creatures the first was the sky, the second water, the third dry land, the fourth plants, the fifth animals, the sixth mankind." The work of creation filled just a year (365 days), and the six acts correspond to the

<sup>14</sup> With these verses in Prov. 8 cf. especially Gatha 1.

six divisions of the year each ending with a festival of the religious calendar. The similarity of this scheme to the six days of creation in Genesis was early remarked, and some have thought it probable that the Persian cosmology was borrowed from the Jews. There is no external difficulty in such a supposition, for even the lost Avestan book on which the Bundahish depends was probably not as old as Genesis. On the other hand, the number and order of the creative acts are perfectly natural, we might almost say, inevitable: sky, sea, land; plants, animals, man. In fact the several acts of creation fit into the six days of Genesis so awkwardly that many Old Testament critics regard the latter as superimposed on the original cosmologic scheme. Aside from this, one great difference remains: in Genesis the sun and moon and other celestial luminaries are introduced after the plants, as the first of the animal creation, a point of view in itself quite in accord with ancient notions, but perhaps inspired here by Jewish antipathy to the worship of the heavenly bodies. In view of these facts the conjecture that the Persian Genesis is dependent on the Hebrew scriptures is superfluous.<sup>15</sup>

The Bundahish tells much in detail about the creation of the luminaries and the constellations; the different regions of the earth, with their mountains, rivers, and lakes; the families and species of animals, real and fabulous; the origin of mankind, and the races of men distributed over the earth. The three great races are called Airya, Tura, and Sairya (the Aryan Iranians, their hereditary Turanian foes, and the Greeks).<sup>16</sup>

If God made mankind, the question must arise, How comes it then that there are wicked men? The answer of the Bundahish is that in the minds of the first pair an evil thought arose, namely, that it was the evil spirit that had created the water, earth, plants, and animals; from this they went on to sins of act, until at last they became worshippers of the Daevas, just as in the Gathas we read that the Daevas themselves chose not rightly between the two primal spirits, but were deluded into choosing

<sup>15</sup> The contrary theory, that the Jewish cosmology was derived from the Persians, is, on chronological grounds, not worth considering.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Dinkart, viii, 13, 9, from the lost Citradat Nask. Here, again, the three groups in Genesis, Shem, Ham (Canaan), and Japhet will suggest themselves, or the three Greek stocks, Aeolians, Ionians, Dorians.

the evil mind. Reflection has gone a step farther, to the question how God could have permitted this. According to the Bundahish, Ahura Mazda bids the guardian genii of men (*fravashis*) say whether is better, that men should contend on earth against the fiend and overcome at last, the fiend perishing, or should always be protected against the destroyer. Christian theologians have reasoned similarly about the fall of Adam and Eve.

The Bundahish has much to tell of Ahriman's evil creatures with which he fills the world, and of the varied mischief they wrought. First of his creatures was Akem Mano, Evil Mind, the counterpart and antagonist of Vohu Mano, the Good Mind. For each of the other Amesha Spentas also he makes a particular deadly foe, but in the others there is no such obvious correspondence; they are, as has already been mentioned, ancient deities, Indra, Sauru, Naonhaithya, Tauru, Zairi—the catalogue is not so constant as that of the good powers. Occasionally Taromaiti, Arrogance, appears as the enemy of Armaiti, Humble Piety.

The Greeks in the 4th century B.C. were acquainted with the fact that the Magi divided the history of the world into periods of three thousand years, of which the present age of conflict is one. This scheme appears in the Bundahish. The cycle is 12,000 years. At the beginning Ahura Mazda produced his spiritual creation, and his creatures remained for three thousand years with intangible bodies, free from corruption. The second period of three thousand years is the period of material creation. In the third, Angra Mainyu breaks into the creation of God and causes the greatest distress; this is the age of human history prior to the revelation of the true religion. At the beginning of the fourth period (Anno Mundi 9000) Zoroaster appears; at its close will be the last judgment. Theopompus, if he is completely reported, seems to have said nothing of the age of the spiritual, or ideal, creation; according to him good and evil prevailed each for three thousand years, then for three thousand—the present—they contended and destroyed each other's works; at the end of this period Hades would succumb and the age of perfect blessedness would begin. It would be incautious on this ground to infer that the first period is a later addition to the scheme: the 12,000 years are plainly a great world-year, and Theopompus is concerned only with the idea of the conflict.

The ideal creation has striking resemblance to Platonic theories. Philo sets forth how God, "when he made up his mind to form this visible world, first produced the intelligible world as its type, in order that, employing a bodiless (immaterial) and most godlike pattern, he might fabricate this bodily world." But the parallel is less significant than striking, for the spiritual world of Ahura Mazda is not the ideal type of the material creation: it is simply the beginning, before the intrusion of the devil, when things were in that perfect state in which they will be at the end when he has been finally banished. The material creation is made necessary by the invasion of the enemy; the battle with him must be waged and the victory won in a real world, with carnal weapons as well as spiritual. Plausible as the hypothesis of Greek influence at first seems to be, closer examination does not sustain it.

According to the Vendidad, Ahura Mazda revealed the true religion in the beginning to Yima, son of Vivanhant, and invited him to proclaim it to men. Yima, however, excused himself: the task was beyond his powers. He accepted the humbler charge, to multiply the creatures, care for them, and rule over them. "In my realm there shall be neither cold wind nor hot wind, nor disease nor death." Ahura Mazda bestowed on him the regalia, a seal and sword. The good creatures multiplied so that thrice the earth had to be enlarged to make room for them. But at the end of this golden age of nine hundred years God announced to Yima the approach of a terrible winter, a kind of ice-age, and bade him make a great shelter in which to keep alive choice specimens of plants and animals and human beings to perpetuate their kind and repeople the earth. This myth of the ice-age destroying plant and animal life, and of the preservation of a remnant in the Var of Yima, is the Iranian parallel to the wide-spread flood-myth, of which the Babylonian and Jewish forms are the most familiar. The arid Iranian lands were no climate for a flood; but of winter, "the worst of plagues, the creation of the demons," they had experience enough.

Long ages elapsed after Yima's "gran rifiuto" before God again designated a prophet of the true religion. The second of the Gathas represents the "soul of the kine" complaining before

him of the cruel wrongs it suffered at the hands of brutal men, and Zoroaster is commissioned to be its deliverer by converting men to the law which makes them merciful to beasts. The Vendidad tells how Angra Mainyu, foreseeing the discomfiture he and his creatures were to suffer at Zoroaster's hands, sent demon emissaries to kill him,<sup>17</sup> but Zoroaster routed them by reciting the confession of faith, Ahuna Vairyu, not to speak of rocks as big as houses that he had ready to pelt the devils with, defiantly declaring his purpose to destroy the fiend's creation. Angra Mainyu begs him not to destroy his creation, and promises him that if he will abjure the good law of Mazda he shall have dominion as wide and long as that of the mythical Vadhaghana, "master of the countries."<sup>18</sup> Zoroaster rejects the offer, and declares that he will put the devils to flight with the apparatus of worship and the holy words. Thereupon the whole host, with cries of terror, precipitately flee down to the world of darkness.<sup>19</sup>

The world is a great battlefield, on which beneficent powers ceaselessly contend with baleful, light with darkness, the vivifying waters with drouth and barrenness, the genial warmth with icy winter; the useful animals are beset by beasts of prey, the industrious peasant and herdsman by the marauding nomads, the civilized Iranians have ever to defend themselves against the wild Turanians. Religion teaches men to see in all this the age-long struggle of Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, the good God and the demon of destruction, each with his hosts of allies. It teaches, too, that man is not a passive spectator of this war of gods and demons on whose issue his fortunes and his very existence depend, but a combatant in the thick of the fight. Every man is by his own choice arrayed under the one banner or the other, contending for the triumph of the good world or the bad. The whole conflict is moral: the strife of productive and destructive agencies in nature is not the play of physical forces guided by blind laws or blinder chance, but of benevolent and

<sup>17</sup> For the age of this myth it is significant that the name of the demon of idolatry is Buiti (Buddha).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Matt. 4 8-11.

<sup>19</sup> This attack and rout of the demons is apparently in the infancy of Zoroaster, not at the beginning of his ministry.

malevolent wills. Men, animated by Good Mind or by Evil Mind, battle for the truth and right and goodness or for falsehood and wrong, and their contending is not alone with flesh and blood, but with the "world-rulers of this darkness, the spirit hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."<sup>20</sup> This conception of life as a war with the demons gives its peculiar color to the religion, morals, and customs. In many particulars these resemble the lower religions in which self-defence against evil spirits is the principal feature; but the central theistic and ethical ideas give them a different significance.

The individual believer does not engage in this warfare fighting for his own hand, but as a member of an army. Of the organization of the Zoroastrian state church we have little information. From the Avesta it appears that in Sassanian times the religious heads of the several towns, districts, and provinces constituted an ecclesiastical hierarchy, at the summit of which, the head of the church in the whole empire, stood the Zarathush-trotema, whose seat was at Rai in Media, the system thus corresponding to the political organization as did that of the Christian church in the Roman empire. The ancient name of the priests, the only name in the Avesta,<sup>21</sup> was Athravan, "Fire priest." The Greeks call the Zoroastrian clergy "Magi," which according to Herodotus was the name of a Median tribe; and the Parsis use the same name, the modern Mobed being from *Magu-pat*, "Head Magian." The priesthood was probably from very early times hereditary in certain families, as it is now.

In heroic antiquity the Yashts tell of sacrifices for "a thousand stallions, a thousand bulls, ten thousand sheep," but in the Zoroastrian religion worship consists essentially in the tending of the sacred fire and the offering of Haoma. The Avesta which we have is the liturgy of the Haoma offering on ordinary and extraordinary occasions. Considerable parts of a lost book of the Sassanian Avesta, the "Instructions for the Priests," have been preserved in Nirangistan. The rubrics in modern copies of the Yasna and the traditional ritual of the Parsis doubtless perpetuate the important features of the ceremonies as they were

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ephes. 6 10 ff., and with it Minokhired, c. 43, Sacred Books of the East, xxiv, 84.

<sup>21</sup> An exception in Yasna 65 7.

in Sassanian times. Early reliefs and coins show the king standing before a fire altar under the open sky; the Magi, like the modern Mobeds, had portable altars for service in the houses; but there were also from Achaemenian times on, fire shrines, in which the sacred fire was kept burning on an altar, or, as at present, in a vase filled with ashes. Strabo tells how the priests in Cappadocia went daily into these temples and sang for an hour before the fire, holding a bundle of twigs, and wearing a head-dress which covered their mouths. The shrine is constructed so as to keep the sunlight from falling on the fire and dimming or extinguishing it, according to a wide-spread belief. The fire is guarded from every kind of pollution; it is fed with scrupulously selected wood—modern Parsis in Bombay use sandalwood—the priest wears a thick veil over his nose and mouth, that his breath may not fall on the fire;<sup>22</sup> his hands are encased in long gauntlets, and the wood is handled with tongs. This service is performed five times a day, at the canonical hours.

No other ceremonies take place in this inmost shrine; the preparation and offering of the Haoma is done in other rooms in the temple. The similarity of these rites to those of Brahman Soma offering shows how tenaciously they have been perpetuated from a time before the forefathers of the Indian and Iranian peoples separated. The twigs of the sacred plant are pounded in a mortar, the expressed juice is mixed with milk and holy water, and strained. The draught thus obtained concentrates in itself all the virtues of plants, animals, and the waters; it is drunk sacramentally by the priests in the course of the service and is administered to the dying as a *φάρμακον ἀθανασίας*. The "green Haoma" of this world is a type of the "white Haoma" of the *gaokorena* tree from which is obtained the draught of immortality. Besides the Haoma, the offering comprises small cakes peculiarly marked, with butter or fat to represent animal sacrifice; these also are eaten by the officiating priest in the course of the service.

In former times eight priests took part in the rite: the Zaotar recited the Gathas as the Hotar recites the Vedic hymns in the

<sup>22</sup> A similar precaution is used by Shinto priests in Japan and by cooks in the Mikado's kitchen.



Brahmanic ritual; another pressed the Haoma, a third mixed it with milk, others tended the fire on the small altar and waited in different capacities on the principal ministers, while a master of ceremonies (corresponding to the Brahman) had general oversight of the whole. At present these various functions are concentrated in the hands of two priests, the *Zot* (*Zaotar*), who performs the essential parts of the sacrifice as well as the recitation of the sacred text, while the *Raspi*, who theoretically represents the three absent priests, assists him and makes the responses. The celebrant must be in the superlative stage of ritual holiness which is acquired by the great purification with cow's urine, the antiseptic for demonic infection; and every stage of the ceremony itself is marked by washings and the immersion of the apparatus in holy water. The principal service is addressed to Ahura Mazda and all the holy divinities of the celestial world; to Zarathushtra and all the holy divinities of this terrestrial world; to the Yazatas who preside in turn over the thirty days of the month, beginning with Ahura Mazda and the six Amesta Spentas, and including the genii of gods and of the pious dead. The central part of the liturgy is the recitation of the Gathas.

The whole cultus is a singularly arid ritualism, consonant with the practical genius of the race. The exact performance of the rite and the exact recitation of the long texts in an unintelligible language is the essential thing; so done, it is sure to be efficacious. It not only procures blessings from the gods, but reinforces the gods, and gives them power to overcome hostile influences and work for good. This is the plain lesson of the *Tishtar Yasht*, where *Tishtrya* (*Sirius*), the rain star, is worsted by the drought demon *Apaosha* until Ahura Mazda himself offers a sacrifice dedicated to *Tishtrya* by name; then the demon is ignominiously put to flight and the blessed rain descends. Here, as in many other religions, primitive notions of the magical efficacy of the cultus which seem for a time to be overcome in the development of the idea of the supreme power and goodness of God and the ethical nature of religion come back and intrench themselves impregnably in the ritual. God can be worked for man's advantage by offering, praise, and prayer; or, as theological re-

flection less bluntly puts it, God has appointed these means of moving him to bestow his favors and protection.

A large part of practical religion consists in the observance of the rules of clean and unclean, and in the purifications necessary to repair witting or unwitting infractions of them. Unclean-ness in the religious sense is a demonic contagion. The demons and all their ways and works are unclean, and persons and things that get into the infected neighborhood catch the contagion and may communicate it to others. The sphere in which the presence and agency of demons is most clearly seen is death, and here the greatest precautions must be taken. When death is near, a priest is called in; the dying man recites after him his confession of sin, and the priest puts into his mouth some drops of Haoma as a last sacrament. The demon of death is imagined to wear the form of a carrion fly; to drive him away, a dog is brought into the chamber when the body is laid out, if possible a dog with "four eyes," that is with spots of light color above the eyes, or a white dog with yellow ears, for the "glance of the dog" is a terror to demons.<sup>23</sup> Fire is then brought into the room and fed with sweet-smelling wood, the odor of which kills the demons wherever the wind carries it.<sup>24</sup> A priest, sitting at least three yards from the dead, recites Avestan texts until the funeral procession sets out.

This must take place by daylight, and should not be in rainy weather. The body is carried on an iron bier, by bearers whose business it is and who take professional precautions against infection, to the place where it is to be exposed. In ancient times this might be a dry and barren spot, far from the abode of men; but special structures for the purpose, the Dakhmas (now called in India "towers of silence"), are mentioned in the Avesta. The motive of this singular mode of disposing of the dead is to prevent the defiling of the elements; it is from a Zoroastrian point of view a mortal sin to burn a body or to inhumate it. The modern Dakhma is so constructed that the rain which may fall on the bodies is rapidly carried off in a catch-basin, and thence

<sup>23</sup> This performance is repeated at intervals so long as the body remains in the house.

<sup>24</sup> This seems to be the original motive for the use of incense in the worship of the gods.

through filters into cisterns. The vultures make quick work of the bodies thus exposed; the bones (which when dry are no longer unclean) are from time to time cast into the central pit.<sup>25</sup> Religious services for the benefit of the deceased are kept up for three days, partly in the house, partly in the fire-temple, directed especially to Sraosha, the psychopompos, and are observed with especial diligence on the fourth day, on which the soul confronts the judgment at the Çinvat bridge; during this time the mourners fast from flesh.

For those who have contracted uncleanness by contact with a dead body from which the devil has not been driven away by beasts or birds of prey, and who are therefore themselves possessed by the demon Nasu (νέκυσ), a purification is prescribed in the Vendidad. The active disinfectant is cow's urine applied by aspersion, whereby the demon is driven successively from one lodging-place to another, from head to foot, till at last he escapes from the left great-toe and rushes away, buzzing wildly, to the mountains of the north where the devils are at home. For greater assurance, this is gone through five times more. Then the man rubs himself down with dry earth, and finally washes in water at three depressions in the ground, at the first once, at the second twice, at the third three times. These purifications are repeated at intervals of three days, during which the man must remain in quarantine, and only at the end of the ninth day may he approach the fire or water or earth, or cattle or the faithful. If the demon had been expelled by dogs or birds of prey, washing of the body with cow's urine and water thirty times repeated suffices. A field in which the dead body of a dog is found lying must remain fallow for a year. To throw out on the ground any part of the body of a man or the carcass of a dog of the size of a joint of the little finger or larger is punishable by stripes in proportion, up to a thousand blows of the horsewhip. The ground in which a body has been buried is unclean for fifty years. Running or standing water in which a body is found is unclean; how far, and what to do about it, are subjects of long-drawn-out casuistry. A large part of the Vendidad is taken up with these

<sup>25</sup> The Dakhmas are the favorite haunts of demons who smite men with all manner of diseases.

matters. By a singular yet strictly logical theory, the body of an evil beast, creature of Ahriman, or of an idolator or heretic, is not unclean: the devil who was in him while he was alive has now gone off with his soul, leaving the body pure. Eating the flesh of a dead man or dog is an inexpressible sin.

Next to death the most redoubtable uncleanness is that of a menstruous woman. She is shut up in an isolated apartment, remote from fire and water, from the bunch of sacred twigs, and from believers, and receives her meagre allowance of food in a metal vessel; whoever brings this food must keep at least nine feet away from the woman. If menstruation is prolonged, it is because the demons have brought this scourge upon her; the cow's urine panacea is prescribed again, and revenge is taken on the demons by killing some hundreds of Ahrimanian insects such as ants. Needless to say, commerce with a woman in such a state is a deadly sin: it is as bad, the Vendidad declares, as if a man roasted the flesh of his own son and let the fat run into the fire. Childbirth is similarly unclean, and anyone who touches the mother catches the uncleanness. The same rigid quarantine lasts forty days, and is followed by a similar purification. Much graver is the case of a woman who has had a still-born child or a miscarriage. She is shut up in absolute seclusion for three days, without food or drink; then the Dakhma within her is disinfected by a draught of cow's urine and ashes, after which small rations of boiled milk, or gruel made in milk, or wine without water are allowed; only in peril of death may she be given water, and this profanation of the pure element must be penally expiated. We are familiar with the same notions and with similar, if less rigorous, religious regulations in the Jewish laws, but there the association of uncleanness with demonic influence is not so obvious.

Diseases were brought into the world by the malice of Angra Mainyu; some of them, like leprosy, are in a peculiar degree unclean, and demand the seclusion of the victim from the company of men and the proximity of the pure fire and water and the apparatus of worship. Some can be cured by the knife, others by healing plants which Ahura Mazda created as specifics for the demonic maladies; but the final resort is to the beneficent divine

word, the incantation in the Avesta itself, above all the potent formula Airyama Ishyo (Yasna 54), the prayer to Airyama, who puts to flight diseases, death, pain, and fever, every disease and every death, all the Yatus and all the Pairikas and all the evil Jains.<sup>26</sup>

The ethics of Zoroastrianism bear the distinct impress of its fundamental religious conceptions. The good life is an unceasing conflict against evil within and without. Virtue, like purity, is a defeat of the demons. Morals have therefore a strenuous and militant quality. There is no place for saints who flee from the world; the saint is he who overcomes the evil in the world. Character lies not in overt act alone, but in the inner springs of conduct; "good thoughts, good words, good deeds," is the ever recurring formula.

Among the virtues of the Mazdayasnian, truth has the foremost place: the devil is a liar, and the father of lies. In the Gathas, as we have seen, the Lie (Druj) is the comprehensive name for the demon host and its head, and the world of the Lie is hell. It may well be that the false religion of the Daevas is here chiefly in mind, but in later times, when this phase of the conflict was past, the words bore a more general sense. The Greeks were much impressed by the value the Persians set on truth and by the prominent place they gave it in the education of well-born youths. They abhor falsehood above everything, Herodotus says, and next to that, making debts, for that leads to lying and fraud. A special form of this virtue is good faith in keeping promises and agreements. Mithra is the guardian and vindicator of oaths and covenants; the man who breaks his solemn word is a "Mithra-liar," and incurs the honest god's deadly wrath. "The miscreant who lies to Mithra brings death on a whole country, he harms the good world as much as a hundred malefactors could do. Never break an agreement, O Spitama, neither one that you make with a wicked man nor with an upright man of your own religion; for an agreement holds with both wicked and upright."<sup>27</sup> Perjury is as bad as a hundred heresies—an extraordinary triumph of ethics over orthodoxy!

<sup>26</sup> Names of classes of demons. See Vendidad 20.

<sup>27</sup> Mithra Yasht 1.

Justice and equity—righteousness in the widest sense in dealing with fellow men—has its ideal and presiding genius in Asha, personified Right. The unjust judge is denounced in the Gathas; it is related of Cambyses that he flayed a corrupt judge, and, for an effective reminder, covered with his skin the chair on which his son was seated to succeed him.<sup>28</sup> Justice, next to truth, was inculcated in the education of princes and noble youth.

What we should regard as moral offences in the relations of the sexes fall chiefly, from the Zoroastrian point of view, into the class of impurity, which, however, we do well to remember, is not merely physiological but moral. Paederasty and bestiality, unnatural vices, are crimes punished by death; the offender caught *flagrante delictu* may be killed on the spot by any man, without trial. They are also mortal sins for which there is no repentance or expiation; hell is the inevitable punishment in the other world. Such a sinner is wholly demonic in this life, and hereafter becomes one of the invisible demons (Vendidad 5 32). The prostitute is a dire affliction of gods and men, a human demon, whose look dries up the waters and withers the plants; such creatures should be killed sooner than vipers or wolves. Abortion is treated as homicide.

Since all barren land belongs to the devil, reclamation of such land by irrigation is a meritorious work; he who makes two blades of grass grow where one grew before is not only a benefactor of his kind but a faithful servant of God.

“Who most makes glad the earth? He who plants the most grain, grass, and fruit trees, who brings water to a field where there is none and draws it off where there is too much.” “How is the Mazdaean religion nourished? By zealously sowing grain. He who sows grain sows good; he makes the religion of Mazda progress, he nourishes the religion of Mazda as much as a hundred men’s feet could do, a thousand women’s breasts, ten thousand formulas of the liturgy. When grain was created the devils jumped, when it grew they lost heart, when the joints appeared they wept, when the ear was formed they fled away. In the house where grain perishes the demons abide, but when grain comes up in abundance it is like hot iron in their mouths.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Herodotus v, 25; cf. vii, 194.

<sup>29</sup> Vendidad 3 23 ff.

When the cock, before daybreak, calls men to arise and say their morning prayers, the long-armed Bushyasta, the lazy devil, assails them, "Sleep on, poor man! it is not time yet," but he who at cock-crowing first gets up will be the first in paradise.<sup>30</sup> Compassion and benevolence are also strongly commended in the Avesta; in the Ahuna Vairya, one of the most sacred formulas of the religion, which we may call an ethical confession of faith, charity is declared to be the foundation of the Kingdom of God, "He who succors the poor causes Ahura to reign."

Morals are in the later Avesta part of a sacred law, and that law includes in the same categories and under the same sanctions much that is not intrinsically moral at all, or to which religion gives fictitious moral values. This is one of the universal evils of nomistic religions: ritual correctness, ceremonial purity, sacerdotal casuistry, are raised to the dignity of moral obligations, with the effect of confusing the fundamental difference between them. The dog, especially the shepherd dog, is a very useful animal in a pastoral society, and it is not strange that killing or maltreating him should be a grave offence against the law; but the penalties in this world and the next which the Vendidad attaches to these offences make a dog's life more sacred than a man's. The hedgehog is a great destroyer of the creatures of the evil spirit; a man who kills one shall abide in hell for nine generations unless he expiates his offence on earth by thousands of stripes with the horsewhip. Still more sacred is the otter, probably because it is supposed to destroy noxious water vermin; a whole chapter is devoted to the expiation of the enormous crime of killing one, beginning with ten thousand strokes of the horsewhip. If nothing is more important in morals than a just sense of proportion, not much can be said for the Vendidad. It is fair to observe, however, that such extravagances have the air of priestly fantasias, like some of the incredible programmes of sacrifice of the Brahmanas rather than of serious chapters of legislation.

The legal spirit appears also in the system of penances by which offences are expiated. The commonest of these penances is horsewhipping, and the scale runs from five stripes up to ten thousand.

<sup>30</sup> Vendidad 18 37.

The flagellation was doubtless supposed to drive out the demons, a frequent motive of this pious exercise. A large class of more serious sins are expiated by two hundred stripes; so, for example, if a man give another a blow of which he dies, for the first offence the penalty is ninety stripes, for the second, two hundred. Wilful murder is rated at eight hundred; nocturnal emission <sup>31</sup> (i.e. intercourse with a succubus) at two thousand. The scale runs into such high numbers that the beating must either have been symbolical or commuted for a fine paid to the priests.

Other penances were the providing of materials for worship—a thousand loads of choice wood for the sacred fire, a thousand bundles of twigs (Baresman), a thousand libations of Haoma, for example. Works useful to the community, especially the digging of irrigation canals and the construction of bridges, are also prescribed in expiation of sins. The killing of noxious or demonic animals is another mode—serpents, tortoises, frogs, ants, worms, and the like, by thousands. Here, again, the priests probably had a tariff of commutation for money, but a system in which every offence has its fixed price cannot be regarded as favorable to morality. Not all sins, however, can be thus compounded for: there are inextinguishable sins, such as the inhumation of the body of a man or a dog by a Zoroastrian who knows that it is forbidden by his religion, polluting water or fire by putting a dead body into the pure elements, eating the flesh of a dead man or dog, unnatural vice, and so on. It is to be noted that if a heathen who has committed a deadly sin embraces the Mazdaean faith, repenting of his fault and purposing never to sin thus again, the religion removes all his former sins, however heinous,<sup>32</sup> precisely like Christian baptism. As in all religions which derive their authority from a prophetic revelation and have formulated the content of revelation in dogma, apostasy and heresy are the greatest of sins, for they are the rejection or perversion of the truth of God.

The hereafter loomed large in Zoroastrianism from the outset. The approaching crisis, the great judgment day when all the powers of evil (the Lie, Druj) shall be delivered into the hands of Justice (Asha), their whole army beaten down and shattered,

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Leviticus 15 16; 22 4.

<sup>32</sup> Vendidad 3 40 ff.



when the ordeal of molten metal divides between the servants of God and the worshippers of the demons, is one of the ruling ideas in the Gathas. The prophet knows but two kinds of men, those who are for him and those who are against him, on the side of truth and right or opposed to them, allies of god or of the devil. To these contradictory characters correspond their diverse destinies. The Zoroastrian heaven and hell are not primarily conceived as spheres of retribution, but as the places of God and of the devil, and every man, as he has chosen to serve the one or the other, goes to his own place; it is this that gives them their distinctive character. On the other hand, as the line of moral cleavage is run through the natural world, and even the kingdoms of plants and animals are divided between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, this very hardening of the dualism made the final and complete triumph of good over evil in every sphere a more vital article of faith. As has already been observed, these two aspects of the doctrine, the individual retribution and the end of all evil, are in the Gathas embraced in one great act of judgment. Time introduced perspective into the Persian eschatology as it did into that of the early Christians. The soul goes to its reward or punishment immediately at death; when the appointed time is fulfilled, the body will be raised from the dead and the last judgment will be held.

After death—so runs the simplest story in the *Hadokht Yasht*—the soul of the righteous lingers three days and nights near the head of the body, reciting the hymn that begins, “Good comes to him who does good to another; may Mazda, the Almighty, give him his gifts,” in bliss as great as the whole world of the living contains. At daybreak on the fourth day a perfumed breeze comes wafted to him as it were from the south, and with it comes to him a beautiful maiden, who, at his question, declares herself his own religion, fair with his virtues and pious observances. Through the three forecourts of good thoughts, good words, good deeds, the soul passes into the endless light, into the company of the good and the presence of Ahura Mazda. Other texts add more details. Sraosha and other good angels conduct the soul to the *Cinvat* bridge, protecting it from the assaults of demons by the way. There Mithra, Sraosha, and Rashnu sit in

judgment. Rashnu weighs a man's merits and demerits in the true balance, which does not deviate from justice by a hair's breadth and shows no partiality, but deals alike with the mightiest monarch and the meanest of mankind. Religion goes into the scale, it is needless to say, as well as morality: the good Zoroastrian profession of faith and the penitent confession of sins weigh heavily on the side of salvation, and the funeral mass which the friends of the departed cause to be celebrated is another good work put to his credit. Then he must make essay of the bridge itself, which stretches from the peak of Mount Daitya to the summit of the Elburz, spanning the abyss of hell. For the good it is nine spear-lengths wide, or even a parasang, and he passes with ease to the heavenly mansions on the other side; the wicked finds it narrow as a razor blade, and pitches headlong into the gulf below.

Beyond the bridge, the soul which has happily crossed it comes first to the limbo where those in whom good works and evil were evenly balanced abide till the day of the resurrection, suffering no other pain than the climatic changes of heat and cold. Then follow the three regions of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, that is, according to Persian notion, of the celestial spheres, the sphere of the stars, of the moon, and of the sun, respectively. The older writings do not seem to have any permanent occupants of these regions; they are successive forecourts of the highest heaven. In the journey of Arda Viraf, however, he sees in them souls who on earth "made no prayers, recited no Gathas, contracted no consanguineous marriages," but through other good works came thither; in the highest are such as "in the world exercised good sovereignty, rulership, and chieftainship," as if they were limbos for good heathen.

The "infinite light" is the abode of Ahura Mazda with the archangels and the spirits of the just. When the soul arrives there, the pious dead throng around the new-comer inquiring, "How art thou come from the material world to the world of spirit, from the perishing world to that which perishes not?" but Ahura Mazda bids them not recall to the spirit the distressful journey, and commands that angels' food, butter made in the height of spring, be set before the traveller,<sup>33</sup> and that he be given a richly

<sup>33</sup> The spiritual world is, therefore, not without its creature comforts.

adorned throne. "Forever and everlasting they remain in all glory with the angels of the spiritual existences eternally."

Very different is the lot of the wicked. His soul lingers about the body in great perturbation for three days, murmuring the words of the Gatha, "To what land shall I turn, O Ahura Mazda, whither direct my prayer?" and suffering all of distress that the world holds. The fourth morning, a cold blast, as out of the demonic north, smites him, laden with foul stench. A demon lassoes the soul with his evil noose and drags him to the bridge, where Rashnu with his balances detects all his wickedness. His evil ways confront him embodied in a hideous witch, whose ugliness is the expression of his character. Hell has its vestibules, evil thoughts, evil words, evil deeds, through which the damned arrive in the "infinite darkness," where the wicked dead surround him, the demons mock him, and Angra Mainyu bids bring him loathsome and poisonous food. "And until the resurrection he must be in hell in much misery and torments of many kinds."

The book of Arda Viraf narrates how this pious man's soul was conducted by Sraosha through heaven and hell and safely reinstalled in his body to tell the tale, an Iranian parallel to Enoch, or still more closely to the Apocalypse of Peter and the mediaeval Christian vision literature, and a rude forerunner of Dante. The author's imagination does not succeed in giving much variety to heaven: golden thrones, fine carpets, rich cushions, gorgeous raiment, fragrant perfumes, and over all the glorious light, exhaust his resources. Hell is, as usual, much more vividly depicted. Its darkness is so dense that, though the souls are crowded thick together, each imagines himself alone, and when three days have passed he thinks the nine thousand years must be over and the hour of release at hand. Further on the voyager sees men and women subjected to all manner of ingenious tortures, often retaliatory, as when the man who talked at the dinner table, and said no grace over meat but greedily devoured his water and vegetables, is tormented by hunger and thirst, crying ever, "I shall die"; or the tradesman who gave short measure, and watered his wine and put dust in his grain, and sold his adulterated food-stuffs at high prices, has to spend the millenniums of his sojourn in hell measuring dust and ashes in a bushel and getting nothing

else to eat; or, again, a woman is condemned to lick a hot stove with her tongue because she answered back snappishly to her husband. The catalogue of sins is long and repetitious, and the writer's ingenuity in devising tortures runs out before he is through. Last of all Arda Viraf sees the fiend himself, who taunts the sufferers, "Why did ye ever eat the bread of Ahura Mazda and do my work, and thought not of your own creator but did my will?" Returning then to heaven, he is dismissed by Ahura Mazda with a parting injunction: "Say to the Mazdayasnians, 'There is only one way of piety, the way of the primitive religion; the other ways are no ways. Take ye that one way which is piety, and turn not from it in prosperity nor in adversity . . . and practise good thoughts and good words and good deeds . . . and keep the proper law, but abstain from the improper. And know ye this, that cattle are dust, and gold and silver are dust, and the body of man is dust; he alone mingles not with the dust who in the world praises righteousness and performs duties and good works.'"

The bliss of souls in heaven and their torments in hell are not the final state of mankind. When the appointed time comes, Shaoshyant, the Saviour, will appear, and the dead will be raised, beginning with Gayomard, the archetypal man, and Mashya and Mashoi, the first pair of human beings. All, righteous and wicked, will rise in the places where they died, the bones being demanded back from the earth, the blood from the water, the hair from the plants, and the life from the fire, to which they have respectively been delivered, so that the body is reconstituted of its original materials.<sup>34</sup> The risen dead will be assembled in one place and will know one another; the deeds of all will be manifest, so that the wicked man will be as conspicuous as a white sheep among black ones.<sup>35</sup> The wicked will reproach his pious friend for not turning him from the evil of his ways. Then the righteous and the wicked will be separated, the former going to heaven, while the latter are cast into hell, there to be punished in the body for three days, certain monsters of iniquity being subjected to exemplary sufferings. When this is over, the fire will

<sup>34</sup> This is Christian doctrine also. Cf. Athenagoras, *De resurrectione*, cc. 3. ff.

<sup>35</sup> Black being the common color.

melt the metal in the mountains till it flows like a river, and in its stream all are made pure. To the righteous it will be like walking in warm milk, to the wicked it will be molten metal. Father and son, brother and friend, will inquire, "Where hast thou been these many years, and what was the judgment on thy soul? Wast thou of the righteous or the wicked?" All men become of one speech, and loudly praise Ahura Mazda and the archangels. Shaoshyant then sacrifices the ox Hadhayos, and of his fat and of the white Haoma is prepared the ambrosia (*Hush*) which is given to all men, the food of immortality. Adults are restored as men and women of forty; children as youths of fifteen. Each man has his own wife and knows his own offspring; the life is like that of this world, but there is no begetting of children.

Finally, Ahura Mazda seizes the Evil Spirit, and each of the Amesha Spentas lays hold of his antagonist among the archfiends, Sraosha grappling with Aeshma. The devil flees back into gloom and darkness by the passage by which he first invaded the upper world; hell itself is purified by the molten metal, and is reclaimed for the enlargement of the world. Thus by God's will the restitution of all things is accomplished, and the world is immortal forever and aye. The mountains, which were created by the evil one, are levelled, even the summit which served as abutment for the Çinvat bridge; the earth becomes an even plain, never again buried in ice.

The Zoroastrian dogmatic chronology counts 12,000 years from the beginning of the spiritual creation to the renovation of the world, in four ages of three millenniums each. The revelation to Zoroaster and the founding of the true religion fall at the beginning of the last age, the appearance of Shaoshyant at its close. As in the preceding age each millennium has its salient figure, so the millenniums which lie between Zoroaster's appearance and the end are to have their heroes, bearing the significant names Increaser of Good and Increaser of Prayer, in the Bundahish, Hushedar and Hushedar-mah, who restore the good religion and deliver its oppressed people. Both these and the final deliverer, Shoshans (Shaoshyant), are in a miraculous way sons of Zoroaster.

These Messianic expectations, which are found in the Fra-

vardin Yasht as well as in the Bundahish, are worked up in a remarkable apocalypse, the so-called Bahman Yasht, in which are revealed to Zoroaster the successive periods of history (four or seven) down to the close of his millennium, the iron age when the myriad demons with dishevelled hair of the race of Aeshma (Wrath) invade Iran from the East, and leather-belted Turks and Arabs and Christians make a reign of terror. In this dark time, Hushedar will be born, and, with gods and heroes on his side, will destroy the heathen hordes and their demon allies in a veritable Armageddon.

Zoroastrianism is frequently described as a dualism. To the Gathas, as we have seen, the term is inapplicable, and for the religion of Achaemenian times it is not without significance that Aristotle,<sup>36</sup> though acquainted with the two principles, the good and the evil *daimones*, Oromasdes and Areimanios, yet in the *Metaphysics* classes the Magi with philosophers like Empedocles and Anaxagoras who made the supremely good the first principle and ground of being. The name dualism might seem more appropriate to the doctrine of later writings, such as the Bundahish, which make Ahriman the creator, not only of the demons, but of all that is bad in the natural world, from the wandering planets to the noisome insects. To Moslem controversialists, for whom creation was one of the chief attributes of deity, a creative devil was plainly an evil god; but this is only the logic of opponents, not Zoroastrian teaching or fair implication from it. The Bundahish itself contrasts in the strongest way the omniscience of Ahura Mazda with the limitations of the evil spirit's knowledge either of the present or of the future. It was through ignorance of the event that he accepted the conditions of the nine thousand years' conflict proposed by Ahura Mazda. He has no power to destroy the creatures of God or permanently to deprive him of them by drawing them to his side. However in the present age evil may seem to prevail, the outcome is certain: the works of the devil shall be destroyed, and he forever banished; the earth will be renewed, and hell itself purged by fire; men whom the evil spirit has seduced from their allegiance to God, after receiving the just retribution of their evil deeds,

<sup>36</sup> According to Diogenes Laertius.

will be purified and restored to the eternal life of holiness, and all evil will be forever done away. The triumph of God is in this respect more complete than in Christianity, which leaves hell, with the devil and his angels, and the wicked in torment forever, an unconquered realm of evil.

The "dualism" of Zoroastrianism, as has been said above, is an attempt to account for the evil of the present world, physical as well as moral, upon the premises of an ethical theism which cannot admit that God is the author of any kind of evil. But because God is almighty as well as perfectly good, it can as little admit that evil, even in hell, is a permanent factor in the universe. The Zoroastrian theologians were concerned with the solution of the ethical problem rather than with the remoter problems which their solution raised. The evil spirit appears on the scene like a *diabolus ex machina*; whether he was eternal they do not seem to have asked, nor would they probably have been much disturbed if their logic had carried them to that conclusion, for since they did not define God metaphysically as the infinite and the eternal, but as the good, an eternal devil would not thereby become God. Acquaintance with Greek philosophy or Christian polemics ultimately raised this question, however, and a school of Zoroastrian thinkers posited as the unitary first principle, space or time, from which were separated a good god and an evil demon.<sup>37</sup> The one undivided nature being thus divided, these form the dual system of higher powers, one headed by Ormazd, the other by Ahriman. Theodore of Mopsuestia reports that Zervan (Time), whom he calls also Tyche, was the origin of all things, and that, in the act of making a libation to produce Ormazd, by some error in the rite, he produced both Ormazd and Satan. Shahrastani, in his History of Doctrines, describes a sect of Zervanites who held that Ahriman was born of a doubt in the mind of the great Zervan. This theory seems to be controverted in the Selections of Zad Sparam, 1 24, where it is declared that Ahura Mazda produced the "creature Zervan" (Time). There is no reason to think that the Zervanite metaphysics ever had any religious significance.

<sup>37</sup> Damascius, ed. Kopp, p. 384.

The influence of Persian thought in the West was not confined to its eschatology, nor did it all pass through Jewish channels. It was long ago observed that in the Pauline Epistles the war with evil is not merely a conflict against sinful impulse in a man's self nor against evils in human society; it is a battle with cosmic powers, waged not with "flesh and blood," but "against the principalities, against the powers, against the universal rulers of this dark world, against the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavens," a hierarchy of evil spirits, at whose head is the Evil One, sovereign of the air (that is, of the heavens). The Pauline devil is a figure of commanding rank and of vast power in the universe: Paul calls him outright "the god of this age of the world" (2 Cor. 4 4). A similar position is accorded him in the Johannean books: he is the "ruler of this world" (John 12 31). Judaism never conceded so much independence to its Satan, or Belial. It is not to be imagined that the New Testament writers had any first-hand acquaintance with Zoroastrian literature or religion; but ideas ultimately derived thence may well have been current in Asia Minor. The marked fondness of John for the antithesis of light and darkness may have a similar explanation.

From Asia Minor, where, as has been already noted, his worship was especially popular, the religion of Mithra spread through the Greek and Roman world in the early centuries of our era. In the mysteries, Mithra was the divine Saviour; by initiation into them men sought the salvation of their souls. Mithra was for several generations the most serious rival of Christ in the West. It was Renan, I think, who said that, if the progress of Christianity had been checked in the third century, Mithraism might have become the religion of Europe. Speculations about what might have happened in history if something else had not happened are usually idle, but it is at least interesting to reflect that in Mithraism an Indo-European redemptive religion contested among the Western races of that stock the pre-eminence of Christianity, with its Semitic warp.